

Inequalities in Higher Education and Students' Perceptions of Factors Influencing Academic Performance

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Abstract : This qualitative study aims to answer the following research questions: i) What are the factors that students perceive as relevant to a) promoting and b) preventing good grades? ii) How does socio-economic status (SES) feature in those beliefs? We conducted in-depth interviews with 19 first- and second-year undergraduates of varying SES at a research-intensive university in the UK. The interviews yielded eight factors that students perceived as promoting and six perceived as preventing good grades. The findings suggested one significant difference between the beliefs of low and high SES students in that low SES students perceive themselves to be at a greater disadvantage to their peers while high SES students do not have such beliefs. This could have knock-on effects on their performance.

Keywords : social class, education, academic performance, students' beliefs

Conference Title : ICSES 2018 : International Conference on Sociology of Education and Society

Conference Location : Prague, Czechia

Conference Dates : May 24-25, 2018